

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### Trans-Ocean Products Inc.

#### Impact Washington

#### Trans-Ocean Realizes Tremendous Savings Through Impact Washington Lean Project

##### Client Profile:

Trans-Ocean Products, located in Bellingham, Washington has been producing imitation seafood products since 1985 and is one of the top producers in the U.S. today. The company produces an average of 20 million pounds of product for over 175 customers annually. Trans-Ocean Products employs 100 people.

##### Situation:

As is typical of most food processing companies, the workforce is heavily immigrant-based with a wide range of language and cultures including Hispanic, Philipino, East Indian, Cambodian and Vietnamese. The combination of language and cultural differences impaired work teams and impeded factions of the workforce based on cultural and gender biases. Trans-Ocean Products, looking to implement Lean and find a way to teach Lean principles while at the same time bridge the language and cultural barriers that existed, contacted Impact Washington, formerly known as Washington Manufacturing Services, a NIST MEP network affiliate, for assistance. Impact Washington is part of a four-state consortium of MEP centers that received funding from the Department of Labor (DOL) to work with food companies to implement Lean. The purpose of the grant was to work with companies that have high concentrations of Hispanic workers, with the goal of educating them in Lean and enhancing their value to the companies for which they work.

##### Solution:

Trans-Ocean enrolled in the DOL Food Grant Program and quickly embraced the Lean English Essentials and Cultural Awareness Training as an opportunity to improve both its workforce and management practices. Top management was highly visible in its support and participation from the first day. As a result, the employee buy-in was strong, and they viewed the training as an opportunity for change and personal growth. Line supervisors learned to communicate more effectively, reducing potential behaviors that impeded team participation. Employees began to realize the value and success of working in teams, and began to tackle the Lean implementation.

Kaizen events were then scheduled, and the change began. The first week-long Kaizen was filmed and became a learning event for future Kaizen events. The tools and communication skills learned in the first Kaizen motivated others to participate in future events. A total of three Kaizen events have been completed to date with more Kaizens scheduled through June.

##### Results:

\* Realized over \$1 million in cost savings.

##### Testimonial:

[www.mep.nist.gov](http://www.mep.nist.gov)



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